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CounterPunch

October 1-15, 2004 *Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair* VOL. 11, NO. 17

TERROR AND DEATH: IRAQ FALLS APART

BY PATRICK COCKBURN

Baghdad.

Signs of disintegration are everywhere in Iraq. Oily columns of black smoke billow up from the airport road where US patrols are regularly hit by suicide bombers or roadside bombs between Baghdad and Camp Victory, the gigantic US military headquarters inside the airport.

In a vain attempt to deny cover to resistance fighters, American soldiers have chopped down the palm trees and bushes beside the highway leaving only the stumps behind.

The bombs, usually several heavy artillery shells detonated by a command wire, are very powerful. A family showed me the shattered stock of an American machine-gun, its barrel twisted sideways, hurled onto the roof of their house by the bomb which destroyed an American Humvee in the road outside.

It was bizarre to go early one morning to look at the nondescript and wholly undefended villa from which Kenneth Bigley, Eugene Armstrong and Jack Hensley were kidnapped by ten masked men.

Could they have taken seriously the line pumped out by the White House and Downing Street that the dangers of Iraq were being exaggerated by the media?

They behaved as if they had. Some reports of their abduction said they lived in the affluent al-Mansur district, the embassy quarter of Baghdad. Their house is certainly in al-Mansur, but not in a wealthy part of it.

The two four-wheel drive cars parked in the road advertised the presence of for-

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How Bush Might Have Been Defeated

BY ROBIN BLACKBURN

At first blush the outcome of the US election looks like a ringing endorsement for George W. Bush and the aggressions he had unleashed. And in turn this seems to prove that a majority of US working class and middle class electors are lost in a cultural fog which prevents them from even seeing , let alone pursuing, their own economic interests. But such conclusions are too easily reached. A different campaign by a different contender could have yielded a Democratic victory.

The cultural factors merit serious analysis and receive it in Tom Frank's book *What Went Wrong in Kansas*. He tells us that the Republican strategists use guns and gay marriage to connect with disgruntled working class voters but that mainstream Democrats are too beholden to corporate interests to make an effective counter-attack - to trump cultural populism by economic populism. In fact the cutting of welfare and loss of jobs make family and religious support networks of increasing importance.

More generally why should we conclude with the New York Review crowd that 'Enlightenment values' fail the electoral test when so little was said in their defense? Across a wide range of issues the campaign waged by the Democratic contender willfully avoided posing any clear alternatives.

The US voters were offered two pro-occupation candidates. It's not just that Kerry voted for war in 2002, though that didn't help. It's that he did not bring himself to even hint at Abu Greib or the presidential position papers legitimating torture. Raising this issue would not have been easy but not to raise them at all was to condone the most disgraceful aspect of the President's war policy. Barring a few sick individuals, the photographs of Abu Graib, and the legal papers sanctioning torture, were deeply uncomfortable matters for most conservatives. One of the tests facing the challenger was to find the best way to do this. Though the question was incomparably less serious Bush faced a similar problem over Lewinsky in 2000. To have dwelt too grossly on the matter would have been counter-productive, precisely because many Americans saw the episode as besmirching a sacred institution. But to have avoided the issue altogether would have been to allow the Democrats to win. So Bush and his handlers contrived some oft-repeated phrases about restoring dignity to the White House which did the job nicely.

When Kerry distanced himself from Bush's war and occupation his poll numbers climbed - after the 'wrong war' speech and, even more strikingly, after the first presidential debate where Kerry attacked Bush's plans for disposing of Iraqi oil and for setting up 14 military bases. But this is as far as it got and no more criticism of the objective in Iraq was to be heard.

The war on terror was supposedly a strong point for Bush and he repeated ad nauseam that the best way to fight terrorism was to promote democracy in the Middle East and elsewhere. Kerry stood within yards of Bush listening to this argument without responding in any way to it. The really persistent could look up a speech by Kerry on April 23 and find out that he did not think the objective in Iraq was democracy - stability was the best that could be hoped for, he said then. But no amount of research can unearth any attempt by the Democratic

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From Detroit to Baghdad

Death of an Interrogator

By Alexander Cockburn

When Ed Seitz was killed in the shower by a bomb lobbed into Camp Victory, near Baghdad airport not long before the election, I thought the name was familiar. Seitz, described in news stories as a 41-year-old State Department special agent in the Diplomatic Security Service, had been in Iraq for less than three months. He was billed as the first U.S. diplomat to have been killed in Iraq. The story I remembered put him in Detroit back in late February 2002, which is when John Clarke, an organizer with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) sent to our counterpunch.org Website a vivid account of an encounter with Seitz in the early afternoon of Feb. 19, 2002.

Clarke had crossed the international bridge between Sarnia, Ontario, and Port Huron, Mich., on his way to a speaking engagement that had been set up by students at Michigan State University. He never made the gig. Instead, after border agents had checked him out on the computer, and searched him and his car, he was held in "a controlled reception area".

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Published twice monthly except August, 22 issues a year:
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$100 institutions/supporters
$30 student/low-income
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Petrolia, CA 95558
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"After about an hour and a half", Clarke wrote, "a man entered … and passed by me into the inner offices. He was carrying a big folder and a pile of files. It struck me that he carried them the way a highly skilled worker might carry his or her precision tools. He spent some time in discussion with the local officers, and then I was brought into an interrogation room to deal with him. He introduced himself and gave me his card. His name was Edward J. Seitz of the State Department of the United States Diplomatic Security Service, and his rank was Special Agent. I found him to be an impressive and fascinating character. It was immediately obvious to me that I was dealing with a specialist in interrogation methods. He told the admiring locals at one point that he had been stationed in Yemen, and I avoided speculating on how he had employed his talents there."

In a scenario worthy of Joe Orton, the admiring Clarke described how Seitz expertly shifted from role to role. First, the pose of Inspector Bumble, "extremely affable in his manner and striking a pose of mild confusion that was designed to make me underestimate him." The "basic strategy … apart from general intelligence gathering, was to try and set me up to tell him something false that would place me in the situation of violating U.S. law."

Clarke gave forthright answers, and Seitz's demeanor abruptly changed. Inspector Bumble disappeared. Seitz gradually shifted his chair closer and closer to Clarke, barking out well-informed interrogatories. "Was I personally an anarchist or a socialist? (In the interests of anti-capitalist unity, I won't say which one of these I acknowledged I was.) Seitz had a huge file on OCAP with him that included leaflets from public speaking events I had been at in the United States. He knew the name of the man I stayed with the last time I was in Chicago."

Suddenly, the mask of affability went back on. Seitz told Clarke he was a 'gentleman' and he didn't want to lock him up. He told Clarke he would have to ban him from the U.S. but he could go to the U.S. Consulate in Toronto and apply for a waiver. He could just take a seat in the waiting room while they prepared some paper work but Clarke would soon be on his way.

"I had not been sitting out there long, however, before the special agent came out to try a new tack that I had heard of in the past. Essentially, his plan was to make me think he was utterly mad and, thereby, rattle me to the point where I lost my judgment. I assume the method works better if it is used after serious sleep deprivation. Then came the most astounding part of the whole interrogation.

"Out of the blue, Seitz demanded to know where Osama Bin Laden was hiding. I knew where he was, he insisted. If I grew a beard, I would look like Bin Laden. I was holding back on telling him why I was going to the university and who I was going to meet there.

"If I didn't want to go to jail, it was time to tell him the real story. I replied that I had been quite open with him about my intentions and that sending me to jail was now up to him. He laughed and told me there were no problems. I could go home after all. Did I drink tea or coffee? Would I have a coffee with him if he came up to Toronto? I told him I would, which was the only lie I told that day, and he gathered up his files and left."

Work got busier for Seitz. Soon he was involved in what ultimately became a humiliation for the Department of Justice prosecutors and for security agents like Seitz. This was the Koubriti case (otherwise known as the "Detroit Sleeper Cell case"), the first case to proceed to trial on terrorism-related charges following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The case arose from a Sept. 17, 2001, search of an apartment in the greater Detroit area. Detroit Joint Terrorism Task Force ("JTTF") agents went to the apartment in an attempt to locate and question Nabil Al-Marabh, an individual on the FBI's "watch list" of suspected terrorists.

Although Al-Marabh's name was listed on the mailbox, he was not actually living at the apartment at the time of the search. Instead agents found defendants Karim Koubriti, Ahmed Hannan and Farouk Ali-Haimoud, who were living as apparent transients with little or no furniture.

Life very rapidly became a nightmare for these three, charged with being a sleeper cell of Al Qaeda, spying out the terrain for another terror attack. They were tried and convicted. Then, on August 31 of this year,

(**Interrogator** *continued on page 6*)

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nominee to question whether Bush really was attempting to introduce democracy in the occupied state.

The role of big money notwithstanding, the presidential debates gave the two main candidates direct contact with most voters across a total of six hours. If Kerry wanted to develop a critique of the occupation policy he could easily have ensured that it was heard. The problem was that he didn't have such a critique. Instead, he espoused a more realist and tough-minded version of the President's policy on occupation. A candidate prepared to explain what the occupation really involved might have at least let a little light into the darkness. Above all it could have challenged the absurd idea that recent US policy has had anything to do with promoting democracy, whether in Iraq, Venezuela or anywhere else.

Bush repeatedly accused Kerry of being a liberal. Kerry made no direct reply but preferred to criticize his opponent's resort to labels. Bush's strategists long ago equipped him with 'compassionate conservatism' and added a commitment to 'the ownership society' at the Convention. Kerry and his speech writers lacked strong convictions but in so far as they had any ideas they wrapped the disciplines of neo-liberalism in sub-New Deal verbiage. Instead of nailing their principles to the mast, 'tough liberalism' or whatever, they preferred to evade.

The problem is not just that Democrats seem to lack a core but they also have no way to dramatize their own best issues. Thus President Bush proclaims the 'reform' of Social Security. He wants young workers to be able to divert Social security contributions into individual accounts stuffs with shares. This will ruin the finances of Social Security because it is a Pay-As-You-Go system. There is the further problem that while this is an excellent and cost-effective financing method it will eventually need a boost to surmount the retirement of the baby-boomers. The number of those over 65 is due to rise from 36 million today to 70 million by 2031.

When Kerry was accused of being a liberal it was not his addiction to Locke or Mill that was in question. It was suspicion that Democrats would raise taxes. Kerry did clearly call for an increase in income tax on those earning over $200,000 a year. .But this was his only revenue-raising idea and it could not plausibly be spread over the plethora of spending needs and entitlements that confront the US government..

So the fundamental impasse here was failure to identify new ways of taxing the rich and the corporations with the aim of ensuring the future of programs like Social Security and Medicare. Saving and improving these programs probably means looking for new taxes as well as raising old ones. Among possibilities are a wealth tax, a betterment levey and a share levy. In an article in the July-August 2004 issue of *Challenge*, the economics magazine, I have spelt out one way of guaranteeing the future of both Social security and of the almost bankrupt Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation, the insurance scheme for pension funds. It involves requiring corporations to issue new shares each year equivalent to 10 per cent of their profits. The advantage of such a levy is that it does raise real resources while not subtracting from the firm's cash-flow (with negative consequences for investment and employment). It could raise $10 trillion by 2031 and top up Social Security or, if this is not necessary, furnish resources for an extra layer of pension and health coverage.

This brings me to another yawning absence in the Kerry campaign - its decision

FDR showed that a rich candidate can fight for the interests of working people but JFK the lesser was not one of those.

to keep silent on the string of financial scandals so brilliantly exposed by Eliot Spitzer, the Democratic attorney general in New York. The Wall St brokers and analysts, the mutual fund managers, and the large insurance companies have all been successively exposed by this energetic public servant. Yet Kerry, for some reason -campaign contributions - found no way of involving Spitzer in his campaign.

If his recent speeches are anything to go by, Al Gore would have made better choices across the board. He might also have invested less in TV ads and more in organization building, as did the Republicans. But even more to the point he would have attacked the war and the occupation and forcefully defended Social Security. And hopefully he would have gone much further than Kerry in attacking the world-wide network of bases - bases which menace not only other countries but also America's own most cherished civil liberties.

If we look at the breakdown of support for Kerry we find that he won less support from women than Gore, less support from older voters than Gore, less support from non-Hispanic Catholics than Gore and – by a large margin – less support from Hispanics than Gore. Of course 2004 was not 2000 and Gore would have had to take full account of this. Following his defeat Gore became less pompous. His abiding earnestness would have been a strength. Gore visited picket lines, attacked corporations and old people's homes. Gore's character, his accent, his wife, were all more re-assuring than the character, manners and domestic circumstances of the challenger in 2004. FDR showed that a rich candidate can fight for the interests of working people but JFK the lesser was not one of those.

The clever folks who run the Democratic apparatus should have been able to work out quite a bit of this. Perhaps they had written off their party's chances in advance, perhaps they didn't want to scare off corporate backers, perhaps they were really thinking about another candidate running in 2008?

Perhaps, but I suspect the problem goes deeper. All over the Western world the Left needs to work out a new formula to tackle growing inequality, a gathering assault on social gains and a disastrous resort to commodification of health care and social security of every type.

The DLC types are the last who will deliver this. Bush is going to help out here since he proposes to develop radical new tax measures that could oblige his opponents to respond in kind. The President will also have to cope with the results of his own disastrous war and vast deficits.

If they are any bold spirits left in the Democratic party then this is their moment but it will mean a clean break with the evasion and fakery of the 2000 campaign. It will mean deciding whether they are for or against the bloody occupation, for or against the burden and provocation of 700 overseas military facilities, for or against the self-indulgence of corporate and financial America, for or against decent education , health and pensions.

Robin Blackburn is the author of *Banking on Death, or Investing in Life: the History and Future of Pensions*, published by Verso.

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(**IRAQ** *continued from page 1*)

eigners. I knew the district a little because I used to eat in a kebab restaurant called the Zarzur al-Fallujah a few hundred yards from the villa where these three middle-aged foreigners had stayed for eight months while working at a US base. The owner was from Fallujah, where he had another restaurant, and so were many of his customers. When Fallujah came under the control of insurgents in April, it seemed dangerous to go on eating there. Bigley, Armstrong and Hensley, unarmed and without even a night watchman on the morning they were kidnapped, must have seemed easy pickings.

Iraqis were cynical about how much real independence the new government would have, but thought that nothing could be much worse than direct rule by Paul Bremer. There was a brief moment when Iyad Allawi tried to put some distance between himself and the Americans. He produced a plan which would have allowed Iraqi guerrillas who had killed US soldiers thinking they were doing their patriotic duty to be amnestied. The idea was to split the Sunni Muslim resistance, or at least show that the interim government was not entirely an American pawn. It was too much for Washington to stomach. The plan was watered down and soon forgotten.

Allawi started off with a very narrow political base in Iraq. He comes from a family that was wealthy under the monarchy, but he was a militant member of the Baath Party in the 1960s and early 1970s and appeals to former Baath Party members who lost their jobs under Bremer. At the same time his own career and the movement to which he belonged, the Iraqi National Accord, were fostered by MI6 and the CIA over a quarter of a century. Iraqis are desperate for security and for a few months they hoped the interim government might provide it.

The suicide bombers are generally detested for slaughtering unemployed young men who wait for days outside police stations and army recruitment centers desperately looking for jobs. Allawi was determined to show he was a force to be reckoned with. He chose to confront Muqtada al-Sadr and his Mehdi Army militiamen in Najaf, but he could do this only by relying on the American army. After three weeks most of the city was in ruins, 400 people had been killed and 2500 wounded but Allawi still had not eliminated Sadr or his men.

No sooner had the battle in Najaf ended than the US air force started an intensified bombing campaign against the Sunni resistance west of Baghdad. Boasting of precision strikes against 'terrorists', the US military put out statements claiming dozens of insurgents had been killed, oblivious of Arabic television showing wounded children being carried into Fallujah.

Allawi has put thousands more blue-shirted police on the streets of Baghdad, and there has been a fall in ordinary street crime (serious enough if you live in the city since even petty thieves carry a gun). But the police often act like yet one more militia hungry for perks.

A few hundred yards from the hotel where I live in the Jadriyah district of Baghdad is a compound with 17 luxury houses shaded by green bushes and trees, once occupied by guards and relatives of Saddam Hussein. When he was overthrown last year, 54 poor families moved in. They lived there until one morning the police turned up firing into the air and announced that the compound was going to be their new headquarters. 'We complained to an American patrol but the police said we were members of the Mehdi Army,' said Khadir Abbas Jassim, standing beside a heap of broken furniture and brightly coloured toys which the police had tossed into the street.

We went around the back of the building to talk to Hussein Abdullah, the police general in charge of the operation. He was dismissive of the squatters' complaints. 'We are the legal state and we are just applying the law,' he said. All the while there was a man standing behnd the general jumping up and down trying to attract my attention. We moved out into the street but half a dozen police came with us. The man, who was called Ahmed Hussein, told a complicated story about how the police had looted his house six months previously. The policemen thought he had just accused them of stealing and reached for their pistols. Ahmed looked terrified. 'The police are going to kill me,' he said, 'unless you take me with you in your car.'

Iraq has certainly gotten more dangerous for foreigners in the last three months. Possibly we are just catching up with what the Iraqis have been living through since the war. During the Sunni and Shiite uprisings last April I was caught up in an ambush of American petrol tankers on the road to Fallujah and later picked up by the Mehdi Army at a checkpoint outside Kufa, near Najaf. Since then every road has been cut by insurgents or bandits.

Turkish lorry drivers, not the most easily intimidated group of men, no longer dare drive down the long road from Mosul to Baghdad. When three Iraqi Kurds took the place of some Turks who refused to go to Baghdad they were kidnapped and their decapitated bodies dumped beside the road. Suicide bombers, who before mainly attacked the Iraqi police and army, have started driving their vehicles close to American patrols and convoys before blowing themselves up. This makes US soldiers even more trigger-happy than before.

Foreign journalists used to think that there was some protection in not coming from a country which supplied troops to the occupation. But on August 21 two French journalists, Georges Malbrunot and Christian Chesnot, one of whom was an old friend of mine, were picked up; they are still being held.

Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia all know that their future will in part be determined by what happens in Iraq.

It was also thought that a foreign woman was less likely to be kidnapped than a man, but on 7 September two Italian aid workers, Simona Pari and Simona Torretta, were kidnapped from their office in Baghdad. It's thought that the Italian government paid a vast sum to get them released.

Presumably fortified in the belief that high profile kidnappings of women can elicit ransoms in the millions, a gang kidnapped the head of CARE International, Margaret Hassan on October 19. She had been working in Baghdad for over a decade.

The effect of the increased danger to journalists was to give the impression, at least in the US, that the crisis in Iraq, while bad, was getting no worse, because US network television correspondents rarely left their heavily fortified compounds. This is understandable, given that an American journalist stands a minimal chance of surviving if taken hostage. But it also means that dur-

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Ahmed looked terrified. 'The police are going to kill me,' he said, 'unless you take me with you in your car.'

ing the three-week battle for Najaf, and now in the onslaught5 on Falujah most American correspondents are working as embedded journalists with the US army. The kidnappers, for all their verbose anti-Americanism, ensure that there is less coverage of Iraq in the US media as the violence escalates.

There has been so much violence over these 18 months that it is difficult to make out changes in the pattern. American soldiers are always being blown up by roadside bombs. Suicide bombers are always targeting Iraqi police and army recruits. The interim government and the US and British embassies hide in the Green Zone where they are regularly mortared. But many killings are mysterious.

Assassins are easy to hire. In the al-Jadida market a group of killers put up a poster advertising their services with a price tag of $300 to $400 a murder. Even in Baghdad people found this hard to take. One group appparently singled out for attack are intellectuals and academics, maybe because Islamic militants see them as upholders of secularism, maybe it just seems that they are being targeted because their deaths are more widely publicized.

Early in September somebody shot and badly wounded Professor Khald al-Judi, the dean of al-Nahrein University (once called Saddam University, it has the reputation of having the best-qualified teachers in Iraq). He was being driven to a degree ceremony in the Khadamiyah district of Baghdad when a man opened fire from another vehicle. Professor al-Judi was hit by a bullet in the abdomen and critically wounded. His driver was killed. I went to the al-Khadamiyah Teaching Hospital, where he had been taken after the shooting. An elderly man with a pointed beard, al-Judi was too sick to see me.

I talked to his bodyguard, Mohammed Abdul Hamid, who had been in a second car just behind al-Judi, and saw the attack. 'We were driving on the highway near the Umm al-Kura mosque,' he said, 'when a big modern GMC four-wheel drive colored grey and with the windows open overtook us. I could see the men inside were wearing flak jackets and carrying American rifles. We got stuck in a traffic jam. When they got close to Professor al-Judi's car one of the men in the GMC opened fire.' It did not sound unlikely. A GMC with the windows down so the men inside can shoot quickly usually indicates former soldiers working for a foreign security company. They were as likely to be South African or British as American. Perhaps the professor's car had got too close and the security men shot at what they suspected was a suicide bomber.

Squatting on the floor of the hospital corridor with his back against the wall while the bodyguard talked about the assassination bid was a depressed looking middle-aged man. His name, he said, was Jamal Gafuri. The previous day his son Khalid had been in Haifa Street, a tough Sunni neighbourhood and bastion of the resistance, where he was a street cleaner. At about 7 a.m. a suicide bomber had blown up an American Bradley Fighting Vehicle. Cheering crowds swarmed over it.

Somebody stuck an improvised black flag of Tawhid and Jihad, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's group, in its gun barrel. Then they set fire to it. An hour later, two US helicopters, claiming they had been shot at, fired seven rockets into the crowd. It is more likely they were provoked by the black flag.

Killed along with 12 other people was the correspondent of al-Arabiya, the Arabic satellite channel, who died on air. His blood was on the lens of the television camera which recorded his last moments. Jamal Gafuri said: 'My son Khalid was cleaning the street at the time and he was hit in the head by shrapnel. He is still unconscious.' He showed me a piece of paper written by a doctor itemizing his son's many wounds.

I went to al-Nahrein University to see if they knew anything more about the shooting of their dean. Saadoon Isa, a neat looking intelligent man with quick nervous movements who was acting dean, said he got a phone call on his mobile from Professor al-Judi just after he was hit. 'I have been attacked by the Americans,' he said. He added that the man who shot him was black.

I asked Dr Isa, who taught physical chemistry, if other academics had been attacked. He said: 'Myself for a start.' In May he was in England when he got a phone call from his wife.

His son Muhammad, a 22-year-old student, had been kidnapped and his house stripped. 'They wanted $40,000 but I was able to reduce it to $7000.' When Mohammed was returned, Dr Isa found he had been tortured and kept alone in a room for three days without food or water. As he was being freed by the gang one of them said to him: 'Tell your father to leave the country.' Dr Isa was still wondering if he should go.

It's been strange to sit in Baghdad watching George W. Bush's stump speech about freedom being on the march in Iraq despite continuing troubles. It is a lot worse than that.

Iyad Allawi and the interim government rule parts of Baghdad and some other cities. But there could be uprisings by the Shia in Basra or the Sunni in Mosul at any time.

The government, probably with American prompting, has told the Ministry of Health to stop issuing figures for the number of Iraqi civilians killed and wounded every day.

The government recruits more and more policemen, but in much of the country they stay alive by co-operating with the resistance.

In Mosul province they even contribute a portion of their salary to the insurgents.

The resistance gets more powerful each month but it is also increasingly split between the nationalists and the Islamic militants. Allawi might have been able to take

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(**Iraq** *continued from page 1)*

advantage of this by wooing the nationalists. But he is seen by the resistance as a creature of the occupation.

'Allawi's visit to the US was the visit of an employee to his employer,' said Taher Abdel Karim, a computer engineer I was talking to.

Elections probably will take place in January unless the UN can be persuaded to postpone them. But it is doubtful if the Sunni, whose revolt has been far more successful than they can have expected, will take part in large numbers. The Shia, some 60 per cent of the population but deprived of power for several decades, have long demanded elections and will take part.

Allawi, without a real base of his own, will ally himself with the Kurds, who are well organised, have money and are the only community which supports the occupation (easy for them because there are so few US troops in their areas).

Election or not, the rebellion will go on. The insurgents are very fragmented and often belong to groups only ten to fifteen strong. Because they have no central organization capable of giving orders and getting them obeyed it is unlikely that there will be a ceasefire while the military occupation continues.

The most effective guerrilla units are now very expert. They recently tried to kill the governor of Baghdad, Ali al-Haidri. It was a sophisticated operation. Local shopkeepers said two men had been loitering near a car. When the convoy appeared one of them opened the boot, where a gunman was waiting to open fire. Two other gunmen ran into the street in front of the convoy. The driver of the governor's car tried to escape by driving down a side street but the ambush party had foreseen that and planted a large bomb beside the road. The explosion missed the governor by a second.

Iraq today is like Lebanon after the civil war. In conflict are the Sunni, the Shia and the Kurds and factions within each community. The US is still baffled by its failure to get control of the country after defeating Saddam Hussein so easily last year. The interim government is trying to re-create the Iraqi state.

Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia all know that their future will in part be determined by what happens in Iraq. All have their allies within the country.

The US is still baffled by its failure to get control of the country after defeating Saddam Hussein so easily last year.

There are multiple friction points. Many of the countries and parties involved in the struggle for Iraq are still feeling their own strength. They are all a long way from agreeing an end to the war or even a truce. CP

Patrick Cockburn is the co-author of *Saddam Hussein: American Obsession*, published by Verso.

(**Interrogator** *continued from page 1)*

Eric Strauss, the U.S. attorney in Eastern District of Michigan, filed a motion agreeing with the defendants' counsel that the prime charges be dropped and a new trial ordered.

In fact, the 60-page motion is a rare, very rare, but nonetheless estimable (and extremely readable) testimony to the capacity of the Department of Justice to research and then disclose how a case was won by all too familiar lying, concoction of false testimony, use of false witness (the jailhouse snitch), withholding of potentially exculpatory testimony, and so forth, by government officials, some of senior rank.

What was almost certainly the casual scribble of a demented man, previously lodging in the apartment of the accused, was offered in evidence as the detailed map of a U.S. base in Turkey. A tourist home movie in Las Vegas was brandished to the jury as Al Qaeda espionage.

The U.S. attorney's motion to dismiss seems to agree with the defense translator who had contended that a portion of the videotape's soundtrack that the government's translator claimed contained a direct threat and derogatory remark about America actually contained an old Tunisian song about eating a duck.

Seitz was in the middle of all this. What was he doing in Baghdad? Clarke's speculation about Seitz's past in Yemen makes one wonder. I'm glad Clarke, who thought Seitz was an impressive man, made that vivid sketch that breathed life into what would otherwise have been a brief, dry news item about one more death in a doomed mission. CP

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